



County Administrative Office
Governmental & Legislative Affairs

Josh Candelaria
Director

June 10, 2020

Erick Sklar
President, California Fish and Game Commission
P.O. 944209
Sacramento, CA 94244-2090

RE: Item No. 27 – Western Joshua Tree

Dear President Sklar:

On behalf of the County of San Bernardino, we write to express support for staff's recommendation to continue this item to the August meeting, allowing additional time for input from stakeholders. We also write to express our opposition to the petition list the Western Joshua tree as a threatened species under the California Endangered Species Act (CESA).

With more than 80 percent of the county in federal ownership, public land is a major asset in San Bernardino County. Our diverse public lands support a range of environmental, economic and quality of life benefits. The County is committed to balancing conservation with continuing public access for sustainable multiple uses. Our adopted Countywide Vision states in part, "We envision a sustainable system...in which development complements our natural resources and environment."

With the recent designation of three national monuments, numerous military installations located throughout the County, and 81% of the 20,000 square miles outside of local government's jurisdictions, listing the Joshua tree as a threatened species has the potential to adversely impact the limited development that can occur in rural parts of the County. Critical public infrastructure projects, including road, sewer, and water would require additional environmental review, potentially increasing the cost of projects and delaying completion.

It is also important to note, communities take pride in the Joshua tree and have enacted additional protective measures through local ordinances. Moreover, the tree is considered an iconic species that generally adds property value. In fact, many builders go out of their way to plan developments around existing trees. Listing the Joshua tree on the CESA list will put unnecessary financial burdens on land owners, adversely impacts local economies, and do little to address the alleged long-term threat to the species suggested by the petition.

BOARD OF SUPERVISORS

ROBERT A. LOVINGOOD
First District

JANICE RUTHERFORD
Second District

DAWN ROWE
Third District

CURT HAGMAN
Chairman, Fourth District

JOSIE GONZALES
Vice Chair, Fifth District

Gary McBride
Chief Executive Officer

Furthermore, much of the western Joshua tree population resides on federally protected lands and state preserves, giving them the highest level of protection. Outside those jurisdictions, they are protected under state law through the California Desert Native Plants Act, as well as through local governments regulations, which requires permitting for removal.

For the above reasons, the County of San Bernardino supports staff's recommendation to delay the item to the August meeting and opposes the petitioner's request. If you have any questions regarding the County's position, please do not hesitate to contact Josh Candelaria, Director of Governmental and Legislative Affairs at (909) 387-4821 or jcandelaria@sbcounty.gov.

Sincerely,



Curt Hagman
Board of Supervisors Chairman
Fourth District Supervisor
County of San Bernardino



Dawn Rowe
Board of Supervisors
Third District Supervisors
County of San Bernardino